**Text: John 6:35-51**

Whoever Comes to Me I Will Never Cast Out

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Human beings are a very interesting thing to observe. One of my favorite aspects of history is that it isn’t black and white. Sure, there is a black and white aspect to history, “this battle, this law, this person, happened in this year”, things like this provide the window for us to look through. Last week I brought up the fact that the world is in a very different place now than it was 100 years ago, which has prompted me in the last week to begin taking a look back at what life was like back then. I specifically spent the past week listening to a radio broadcast called “Hardcore History”, a show done by an amateur historian Dan Carlin. The episodes of his show I’ve been listening to are called “A Blueprint for Armageddon”, a series on World War I. Because it was 100 years ago on August 11, 1918, that the Allies launched the Hundred Days Offensive, the final decisive period of the “war to end all wars”. This offensive action would last until the armistice of November 11 and would cause roughly 2.17 million casualties between both sides. This would end the deadliest conflict the world had ever seen. It would be the final push that brought end to over 4 years of nothing but death and destruction. And after these hard years it’s difficult to comprehend how people could do that to each other. Entire generations were simply ended, fighting over trenches and hills. It was horrific. There wasn’t much to feel positive about. The scars of this era can still be seen. Every year farmers in France and Belgium still find, in some cases, unexploded shells from this time. The French government has a Department of Mine clearance that still recovers roughly 900 tons of unexploded munitions every year. Since 1945, approximately 630 French clearers have died handling unexploded munitions. This is called the “Iron Harvest”. I look at where the world was then, and I look at where the world is now, and I see a completely different place. The world today is such a better place today than it was in 1918. Now granted, this has not been an easy transformation. For it was on August 15, 1945 that the initial announcement of Japan’s surrender was made, thus bringing an end to the second World War. There is no denying that people have found a multitude of ways to do terrible things to one another. The world today is far removed from such conflicts. The generations entering the work force today don’t have a great war. They didn’t grow up with people who lived through the depression and had nothing. I was fortunate enough to have a great grandmother who lived through the depression. She told us stories of how they had to make tomato soup out of Heinz Ketchup. They were difficult times indeed, but since then America has known nothing but prosperity. It is truly amazing what we can do now.

We are more connected to one another than ever before. With social media we can see into one another’s lives like never before. Before things like social media, and cell phones, people had to form real relationships. We had to be able to socialize with one another, face to face, not through a screen. I remember calling over to my friends’ house, on a landline, and hoping that I didn’t get stonewalled by their parents. Yet now all you need to do to socialize is send a text or go on Facebook. We are more connected now, than ever before, we are more prosperous now, than ever before, and yet we are more isolated from one another than ever before. There is something missing in our society that is causing us to be angsty and on edge with one another. This environment is starting to feel more and more like a powder keg as we have begun to be less and less civil with one another. We have become a socially awkward generation that can’t even carry on a simple conversation. One of the things that social media has allowed us to see is how narcissistic we are. That word, narcissism, comes from the Greek mythology of the character Narcissus, a man who fell in love with his own reflection. This idea of loving one’s self to the fullest is not a new wave of thought. It has been around since the very beginning of man’s fall into sin. For if Adam and Eve had been thinking of the consequences of their actions, who knows where we would be. The idea of loving yourself before others is a given. Yet Jesus, when he gives us the great law of “love your neighbor as yourself”, says first, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart.” That requires us to sacrifice the love we have for ourselves, and give it to God. I don’t think that we truly realize what a difficult task that is. For there has only been one person that has been able to accomplish the two laws that he set. For Jesus did love the Lord with all his heart. He loved God so much that he followed his law perfectly, and fulfilled the will of God, even though he didn’t want to. That’s one of the amazing things about the prayer in the garden on Good Friday. Jesus is asking God to find another way for salvation! His humanity was showing because he didn’t want to die. Yet in the end, his love for God, and his love for his neighbor, gave cause to the greatest sacrifice we’ve ever seen.

Jesus says, “**All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.**” That is one of the amazing things about God, because sometimes we feel as though God isolates himself from us. Sometimes we feel as though we are cut off from him. When we are suffering with illness or with pain or loneliness, God can seem far off. Yet our God is never far off. Our God is never far away from us. Jesus tells us that he will never cast us out, and that is the truth. We are never far from the one who died for our sins, for he desires to have us know him. As we run further and further from one another, our God is trying to come closer and closer with us. That means that he wants us to have a life of prayer with him. That means that he wants us to each come and study his word. That means he wants us to all be involved in the life of the church. These are the ways that we can have a relationship with our God. And one thing that we find, is that when we try to have a relationship with our God, we are brought into a church of believers. We become a part of a community that supports one another, that prays for one another, and that together hopes for eternal life. We each spend so much time trying to put walls up around ourselves, that we often don’t realize that is the source of our suffering. That’s what can cause man to have such terrible terrible wars as I mentioned earlier. Yet when we live our lives to God, as Paul says, we find that he lives for us. We find that Jesus lived for us, and died for us. We find that the end result of God’s relationship with man is for us. So much of human history is done on a “for me” basis. But God’s history with us is based on “for you”. When we partake of communion we don’t hear “for me” we hear “for you”. Thanks be to God this day that he has seen fit to save us from ourselves. Thanks be to God this day that he lives for us. And thanks be to God that he has given us the faith to believe in the power of the cross, the power of forgiveness, and the power of the love of Christ. Amen. Now may the peace of God which surpasses our understanding guard and keep your hearts in Christ Jesus now and forever. Amen.